# Watts, L. A. and South Africa

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# Prologue

During the Watts, Los Angeles uprising of 1965 , there were certain occurrences which have led me to believe that South Africa and the United States have very much in common.

For instance, when the United Nations General Assembly submitted documented evidence to the South African government charging them with brutality and prison torture, the then Minister of Justice, B.J. Vorster, replied coldly that “there has not been a single incident of torture.” Likewise, when charges of police brutality were brought before the late Chief William H. Parker in Los Angeles, he too replied flatly that “there is no brutality.”

There are ugly similarities between South Africa and the United States.

For instance, in January 1964, when commenting on the Ninety-Day Detention Clause (which allows the South African law enforcement agencies to keep Africans imprisoned in solitary confinement until they break down and make “confessions”), the Minister of Justice stated that renewal of the Ninety-Day Detention Clause was essential to the preservation of law and order and that “although we are on top of the situation—and have been for some time—one never knows what might crop up.” Likewise, when he was assured that he had preserved law and order by using 15,000 National Guardsmen in Los Angeles, Chief Parker exclaimed that “for the time being, we’re on the top and they are on the bottom.”

# The Hopelessness in America

The holocaust of the Watts area, the rifles and the bombs that showed their horrible faces in the once racially “peaceful” zone of California should serve as final proof that white America’s cruel negligence of the Black race must be brought to an abrupt, immediate end. Logically, eruptions such as these should startle all opponents of human rights into a gentle, forgiving surrender. Logically, if we were dealing with sane government officials or with sane white citizens, the final chapter of racial injustices in America should now be brought to its long overdue conclusion.

But white America’s injustices will not end at this point in history. And the opponents of human rights shall not surrender after Los Angeles. For we are not dealing with sane people, or sane government officials.

No, my Brothers, we are dealing with a system. We are dealing with a system which is dominated and led by a hard inner core of white people who are convinced that they possess a certain invincibility–a hard core of people who are convinced that such things as the Watts uprising can be crushed.

We are dealing with a system—known in America as the White Power — which operates from under an invisible, ghost-like shield of protection. And, most important of all, this system, this White Power Structure, is an integral part of an international coalition of white capitalists who have dedicated their lives to the economic repression and subjugation of dark-skinned people throughout the entire world.

Do you actually believe that there is any hope for future peace in America under these circumstances? Or do you actually believe that America’s racial problems can be solved solely in America? Or that America’s racial problems are somehow separate and isolated from the international crises that face the world today? Crises like Cuba, the Congo, South Africa, and Red China?

# Legislation: A Historical Farce

Sadly, sadly enough, I am aware that there are some Black Americans who prefer to believe that the American racial problem can be solved within the boundaries of America itself, once and for all. And, worse than that, I am aware that scores of Black Americans prefer to believe that all this talk about the White Power Structure is being exaggerated and overblown. In fact, many believe that since the passage of so many congressional bills and acts by President Johnson, it is not so much a matter of destroying the Power Structure, but it is, rather, just a matter of ensuring that those bills and acts are enforced by law.

What in the hell is wrong with many Black Americans? Why do they continue to place hope in the idea that law enforcement agencies will ever operate in their favor? Why do they keep forgetting that all law enforcement agencies were originally set up for the protection of white peoples' interests? Why do so many refuse to understand that the local police departments, the F.B.I., and C.I.A. will always be the instruments of white racists–even if they do have Black police captains. I ask you, did Captain Seely reduced the rate of police brutality in Harlem by his presence?

And can't these Black Americans see that this is not a simple matter of education, voting, and employment either? Can't they see that the passage of so-called civil rights bills is just other trick-bag for keeping is Black people from waging a realistic struggle — realistic like Watts, Cleveland, et al.? Can't they see that President Johnson signs too many bills to be believed? And that not a single one of those bills will ever be fully enforced by this country? Can't they see that right now, especially after Los Angeles, the leaders of the White Power Structure will only resort to double talk or intimidation in reaction to the suffering people of the ghettos?

# The Tactic of Double Talk

Remember President Johnson's actions during and following the Los Angeles insurrection? During the insurrection, Johnson was quite careful to stay out of the public eye. He made no statements and no public appearances. Why? Because he realized that his appearance on television or anywhere else, would merely add fuel to the fire that was already furiously blazing. He realized that during the disorder the minds of the Black people in Los Angeles were keenly aware of the total hypocrisies of America. If they had seen or heard from President Johnson during the riots, they would merely have been reminded of these hypocrisies.

Now comes the double talk. Once the uprising subsided, President Johnson — along with many other officials in the nation — began to issue statements of concern about Black people. The fire had subsided to smouldering embers and it was now appropriate to show concern, to appease the Black Communities.

Bi-racial investigating committees were hastily constructed to "determine the underlying causes of the riots."

Thus we find that President Johnson made the following statement at a press conference on Thursday, August 26th 1965:

> … when people feel that they don't get a fair shake, when they feel that Justice is not open to them, you alwas see these things occur…And I asked myself last night, what can I do to see that we don't have any more incidents as occurred in this country?

Then the kind-hearted, compassionate, sympathetic President, pointed out that he had sent a special "task force" to California "to make available the best programs now known to wipe out the causes of such out-bursts…"

Now just who was Johnson trying to fool? Just who did he think would fall for his worn-out tricks? Why, this was the same man who passed the Civil Rights Bill of 1964. This was the same man who had fathered the famous Poverty Program. The same man who had enacted the Voters' Registration Bill the day before the Los Angeles' uprisings erupted. What does he mean

that he's *going to* make available the best programs known? I thought the "best programs" had already been made available. Evidently President Johnson has simply been passing bills without seeing to their enforcement, or else he has had some "decent programs" that he hasn't brought forward to us.

# The Tactic of Intimidation

On the other hand, the President along with many other officials in the nation, began to issue statements that would intimidate the Black people. As the figurehead of the White Power Structure, it is only natural to expect threats and a tremendous show of power to frighten the Black people back to a state of docility and non-violence. And the other white leaders responded in the same manner as the President witb threats and an awesome show of power.

For example, look at how local government officials throughout the nation began making repeated statements that "adequate preparations have been made to immediately activate the combined forces of the police, the state National Guards, and the federal law enforcement agencies in the event of another racial outburst. This, I maintain, is intimidation.

When Deputy Police Chief Roger Murdock of Los Angeles declared that "we've been playing games with these kids long enough." this is intimidation.

Notice also how an irate and vengeful President Johnson appeared on national television screens and swore, on Friday, August 20th, that:

> A rioter with a Molotov cocktail in his hands is not fighting for civil rights any more than a Klansman with a sheet on his back and a mask on his face."
>
> They are both more or less what the law declares them: Lawbreakers, destroyers of constitutional rights and liberties, and would ultimately destroy a free America. AND THAT MUST BE EXPOSED AND DEALT WITH!

Again, this is a form of intimidation. And President Johnson, the same man who claims to understand that deprived human rights can only lead to violence, has the audacity to compare the actions of the Watts people with the terror of the Ku Klux Klan.

Now just who was the self-righteous Johnson trying to fool with all his talk about "destroyers of constitutional rights and liberties?" Just who did he

think would forget that he has personally contributed to the crusade against the Black people of America?

Don't forget that President Lyndon B. Johnson admittedly voted against 75% of all the civil rights legislation presented to him during his career as both a congressman and senator from Texas. Certainly this man, of *all* people, cannot justifiably point an accusing, threatening finger at the deprived masses of the Watts area. Why, any man who would dare assume the responsibility of high public office and do no more than help to perpetuate segregation and racial inequality ought not dare, for any reason, to point his finger at those same people who were victims of his publicized political bigotry!

Don't forget that there are thousands of Black families who have migrated from Texas seeking a better way of life. And there are many of those Black families now living in the Watts area, the same families, most likely, who lived in Texas while Lyndon Johnson was busy defeating civil rights bills.

No, President Johnson, Black people will not buy your Great Society any more than the white people have bought Martin Luther King's Community of Love. And on the basis of the documented evidence against you—years of "NAYS," it appears as though you can prepare the country for plenty of domestic unrest.

# Should We Employ Violence?

The other day while analyzing the recent uprisings in Cleveland, Watts, Chicago, etc., I heard one Brother say to another that Black people ought to take a sober look at the possibilities of premeditated violence as a means of shaking off the chains of White Supremacy in America. After all, he said, Black people allow themselves to be beaten and killed by the thousands and not one of our so-called negro leaders advise them to defend themselves against attack." The Brother added that the Los Angeles rebellion was a healthy sign of Afro-American maturity and disillusionment.

But the Brother to whom he was talking became disturbed and quickly asked the following question: "Man, what's wrong with you? You act like you *want* those damned riots to happen." The answer that the first Brother gave is not that important.

However, every Afro-American interested in freedom and equality should know that there are, as I said earlier, ugly similarities between South Africa and the United States. And every interested Black man should refer to South African history, and study the testimony of Nelson Mandela.

During the Rivonia trials in Pretoria, on April 20, 1964, Nelson Mandela, a prominent leader of the South African Blacks, gave the following testimony on violence after being accused of 222 acts of sabotage against the racist government of the late Dr. Hendrik Verwoerd, the Prime Minister:

> I do not, however, deny that I planned sabotage. I did not plan it in a spirit of recklessness, Nor because I have any love of violence. I planned it as a result of a calm and sober assessment of the situation that had arisen after many years of tyranny, exploitation and oppression of my people by the Whites…
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> At the beginning of June, 1961, after a long and anxious assessment of the South African Situation, I and some colleagues, came to the conclusion that as violence in this country was inevitable, it would be unrealistic and Wrong for African leaders to continue Preaching peace and non-violence at a time when the Government met our peaceful demands with force

This conclusion was not easily arrived at. It was only when all else had failed, when all channels of peaceful protest had been barred to us, the decision was made to embark on violent forms of political struggle, and to form *Umbonto We Sizwe*. We did so not because we desired such a course, but solely because the Government had left us with no other Choice….